(e) whether it has endangered the food security of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Growth rate of Agriculture GDP has been always positive over the Plan periods since the Fifth Plan period, even though these figures have varied between 2.1 to 5.7 per cent. During the last four years, the overall average growth rate has been more than 4%. While it is true that during the initial Plan periods Gross Capital Formation had seen some fluctuating trend, but the total investment in agriculture has increased in the range of 8% to 14.2% per annum during the period 2004-05 to 2007-08. Out of this, the public sector investment has increased at a faster rate in the range of 17.6% to 22.5%. Thus, agriculture profession is indeed sustainable. In order to make agriculture a remunerative vocation as well, the Government also provides Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) after considering the recommendations of Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices. Substantial increase in MSP of major cereals ranging from 49% to 78% was provided during the last five years. MSPs of pulses and oilseeds were enhanced by upto 83% during the same period.

(c) to (e) The National Policy for Farmers (NPF), 2007 aims to improve economic viability of farming to substantially increase the net income of the farmers. Towards this end. Government of India envisages growing farm sector, better rural infrastructure and connectivity, skill development, adequate power supply and easy availability of credit that would help in the creation of more employment opportunities in the rural non-farm sector and in turn, enhance the income of farm households by creating opportunities for small and marginal farmers as well as landless farmers. Besides, for the benefit of small and marginal farmers, the NPF, 2007 provides for Contract Farming, Cooperative Farming, Group Farming, Small Holders' Estates, Farmers Companies and State Farms, so that the economies of scale could be realized by achieving higher level of production through use of latest technology and other inputs. The small land owners would continue to hold their land in their names and would be given the share from the income generated by the farming activities by the contracting institutions as per their landholding and to supplement their income. They would also be provided job opportunities either on farm itself or in the non-farm avenues. These policy initiatives have resulted in increase in foodgrain production over the years barring the years in which same natural calamity had struck. Thus, food security of the nation has not been endangered.

Damage to kharif crops in Vidarbha

144. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in Vidarbha, Kharif season crops like jowar were completely lost, soyabean suffered more than 60 per cent damage and cotton crop equally faced the heat;

(b) if so, whether crops in three million hectares have suffered the worst; and

(c) whether long-term war-footing measures were adopted to substantially upgrade the abysmally poor irrigation facilities to give a modicum of relief to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) In Vidarbha region, Kharif jowar has been sown on an area of 2.73 lakh hectare, soybean on 19.31 lakh hectare and cotton on 13.14 lakh hectare. Due to long dry spell, soyabean crop on 5.00 lakh hectare is damaged to the extent of about 50 percent and 1.60 lakh hectare is damaged upto 30 percent. There is likely reduction in yield of cotton by 25 to 30 percent in ; about 2.70 lakh hectare and 15 to 20 percent on 10.40 lakh hectare. In jowar crop, there is likely reduction in yield by about 30 to 35 percent on 0.16 lakh hectare area and 10 percent reduction on 2.50 lakh hectare.

(c) To make effective use of available water, drip irrigation system is promoted through various Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Drip irrigation sets on 9366 hectares of cotton area are installed and 17300 farm ponds have been dug for rain water harvesting in Vidarbha region. Further, various *in-situ* water conservation measures like ridges and furrows, dead furrows etc. are promoted through TMC.

FRP for sugarcane

145. SHRI D. RAJA:
SHRI R.C. SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has announced Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane at Rs.129.84 per quintal;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the sugarcane farmers are not satisfied with the newly announced FRP and they have resorted to agitation protesting against it; and

(d) if so, the details and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government has announced the 'Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane payable by sugar mills for 2009-10 sugar season at Rs.129.84 per quintal linked to a basic recovery of 9.5% subject to a premium of Rs. 1.37 per quintal for every 0.1 percentage increase in recovery above that level.

(c) and (d) Though there has been no official representation from the farmers or their associations in this regard, it is learnt from media reports that the farmers have got an understanding that the FRP is the maximum price of sugarcane above which they are not entitled to get a price for their cane from the mills. The Government has tried to inform the farmers that FRP is a bench-mark price and the price payable will be a negotiated price between the farmers and the mills and will have to be equal to or above the FRP. The Government has issued clarifications in the press accordingly and has even held meetings with the sugar mills to clarify the same unequivocally and advised them to start crushing of sugarcane early.